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OJJDP Update on Programs

Robert W. Sweet, Jr., Administrator **July 1991**

OJJDP and Boys and Girls Clubs of America: Public Housing and High-Risk Youth

This bulletin is dedicated to the memory of our colleague Steven Bradford, an active volunteer with the Boys and Girls Clubs of America and the author of this *Update* as a staff person for the Juvenile Justice Resource Center.

For more than 130 years, the Boys Clubs of America has been working to prevent juvenile delinquency and develop productive citizens and leaders among our Nation's most vulnerable youth. Recently the Boys Clubs of America and the Girls Clubs of America combined and were renamed the Boys and Girls Clubs of America (BGCA). The Clubs provide youth with alternatives to the streets that include activities that develop their sense of belonging, competence, usefulness, and influence. More than 1,100 local Clubs provide activities for 1.4 million boys and girls nationwide. Typically, Club members live in large or medium-sized cities; have three or more siblings; are from minority populations; and have families whose annual income is less than $12,000.

A 1986 Louis Harris and Associates survey—projectable to 3,500,000 alumni—showed that BGCA experiences help youth develop leadership skills and lay the foundation for the successes achieved by Club alumni in later life. Results indicate that Clubs have a positive impact on the lives of young people, especially those from disadvantaged families.

The survey also reported that three out of four Club alumni believe their Club experiences helped them to avoid difficulty with the law, and Clubs were viewed by alumni as a support system against drug abuse.

Activities available at Clubs, such as sports, exercise, and other group activities, provide the staff with excellent vehicles to teach members teamwork, responsibility, and leadership.

BGCA's proven record of helping at-risk youth stay out of trouble and preparing them to make worthwhile contributions

From the Administrator

For more than a decade, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention has been proud to be associated with the Boys and Girls Clubs of America (BGCA).

This group represents one of the most respected organizations working with youth, especially in our inner cities. There, with temptations and opportunities for crime on every street corner, Boys and Girls Clubs have guided many of these young people toward heightened self-esteem and away from drugs and delinquency.

It is thus no surprise that when 14 years ago OJJDP sought a partner to test some new approaches to preventing delinquency, the Office chose the Boys Clubs of America.

The Clubs' strong record of positive involvement with children at particular risk—those in declining neighborhoods and in public housing—was a key factor.

The initial partnership between OJJDP and BGCA was later expanded through Targeted Outreach, a program that actively sought out youth that had not been reached before. A sophisticated case management system tracks what works and what does not work while at the same time protecting young people's right of privacy.

Still later OJJDP added SMART Moves to the Boys and Girls Clubs agenda. We asked BGCA to pass on its expertise by training the SMART Moves staff in how to help young people say "no" to drugs and sex.

We at OJJDP are proud of what we have achieved together, but much remains to be done. Individual successes, especially in drug prevention and in working with youth in public housing, need to be translated into programs that other communities and youth-serving agencies can follow. This is the focus of OJJDP's current grants to BGCA.

We must show that our at-risk young people, given the friendship, trust, and encouragement of caring adults and their own peers, can develop into responsible, productive citizens.

Robert W. Sweet, Jr
Administrator

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to their communities as adults earned the organization an Award of Excellence from the Administrator of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) in 1985. However, OJJDP's partnership with BGCA began long before.

In 1977, OJJDP awarded BGCA a 3-year grant to the then Boys Clubs of America for their Delinquency Prevention Demonstration Project, which tested more than 20 delinquency prevention approaches in 9 Clubs. Examples of the 20 approaches include developing youth employment opportunities, counseling and remedial programs, wilderness challenges, programs for families, and neighborhood reclamation. Ten delinquency prevention program principles resulted from this project and are the foundation of BGCA's Targeted Outreach program.

BGCA's involvement in public housing communities began more than 37 years ago. Many of the original Clubs have expanded considerably as a direct result of identifying and meeting the special needs of communities. The Clubs that operate cooperatively with local public housing authorities have played a critical role in reducing vandalism, curbing gang violence and drug activity, and giving youth a sense of belonging and purpose.

Targeted Outreach

The BGCA Task Force on Inappropriate Detention was created in 1981 with technical assistance provided by OJJDP. The Task Force's work resulted in the unanimous adoption of the program statement Inappropriate Detention of Juveniles by the BGCA National Board of Directors. From this philosophy evolved an emergency response system called Targeting Programs for Delinquency Intervention—or Targeted Outreach—a comprehensive program of effective techniques and strategies that point young people in alternative, positive directions through Boys and Girls Club programs.

The philosophy and purpose of BGCA is enhanced by Targeted Outreach's ability to reach out to adolescents who may never have been inclined to become Club members. After an adolescent has been recruited, methods to mainstream and keep the youth active in the Club are employed, based on past Club experiences and successes. Eighty Clubs in 10 metropolitan areas undertook BGCA's first Targeted Outreach program. They recruited 4,525 at-risk youth and established formal linkages with 335 community-based youth-serving agencies and organizations.

A special Targeted Outreach Case Management System has been developed that tracks the youths' progress and participation, and guides the Clubs in designing individual programs to curb delinquency.

The Case Management System

This is a tool by which accurate records are kept on Targeted Outreach participants. It helps in determining, meeting, and evaluating the needs and interests of the Boys and Girls Clubs as they seek to serve youth in their Targeted Outreach programs. The following information on the youth is included in the Case Management System:

- Demographic information.
- Source of referral.
- Attendance record.
- Involvement with the juvenile justice system.
- At-risk status.
- School and Club status.
- Achievements.
- Targeted Outreach goals and objectives for each individual.
- Other pertinent information.

Defining needs

The following are five major reasons for maintaining a Case Management System: Program Accountability, Staff Evaluation, Youth Evaluation, Troubleshooting Problems, and Accountability to Funding Sources. The Case Management System of recordkeeping is conducted in a confidential, nonstigmatizing manner since most of the Targeted Outreach youth do not know they are involved in a special Club program.

As of March 1, 1989, BGCA's national statistics show that 39 percent of Targeted Outreach participants demonstrated a positive change in academic performance; 68 percent remained active in the Club after 2 years in the program; and 93 percent did not have further contact with the juvenile justice system 2 years after joining the Club.

To date, more than 10,000 at-risk youth, ages 12 to 18, have been recruited and mainstreamed into the programs of the Boys and Girls Clubs. Locally, Clubs have raised over $3 million to continue, expand, and enhance their delinquency intervention programs. The Clubs have built a collaborative relationship of over 1,200 formalized linkages with local juvenile courts, police departments, schools, and other youth-serving agencies and organizations that refer youth in danger of becoming delinquent to programs such as Targeted Outreach.

Effective results

A particularly successful Club is located at the Wilkinson Terrace Apartments in Shreveport, Louisiana. There the public housing authority, Salvation Army, Boys and Girls Clubs, and the criminal justice department of Louisiana State University (LSU) have joined to design and implement a service program for 379 at-risk youth. The public housing authority provides the facilities for the Club; the Salvation Army and Boys and Girls Clubs provide the program structure, train staff, and purchase equipment and program supplies.

Students from LSU's criminal justice department provide aid in daily programming, community research, and statistical analyses, and they develop outside resources to support the program. Through Targeted Outreach, youth participate in a job search program that

teaches them skills in securing employment. They receive information from the Shreveport Police Department about illegal drugs and alcohol. Club members participate in a nutrition class sponsored by the Shreveport Nutrition Program. The members learn how to provide a meal for themselves and others when they are alone. This is beneficial to many that have the responsibility of feeding younger siblings when parents and guardians are not available.

The Shreveport Housing Authority reports that since Targeted Outreach was inaugurated at the Wilkinson Terrace Apartments, there have been markedly fewer incidents of vandalism, burglaries, and muggings—not only in the complex but also in the surrounding neighborhood.

A new initiative

The Targeted Outreach Youth Gang Prevention and Intervention Program, a new OJJDP and Health and Human Services Interagency Agreement initiative, is being built in its early stages on BGCA'S Targeted Outreach Program. It is designed to develop, field test, and replicate effective Club youth gang intervention and prevention techniques aimed at reaching at-risk youth. This 3-year project will serve more than 1,900 youth through a minimum of 200 linkages with community agencies.

Thirty Clubs have been selected as gang prevention sites. The primary goal of these sites will be to deter youth from becoming involved in gangs, with a primary focus aimed at 7 to 11 year olds. Each of the 30 Boys and Girls Clubs will implement its own unique program model—based upon the community, the needs of their members, and the severity of the youth gang problem locally. BGCA will provide training, materials, and technical assistance to all sites. Clubs selected for the program will receive a three-part manual that includes a *Gang Intervention and Prevention Manual* and a *Targeted Outreach In-service Training Manual.*

Three Clubs have been selected as intervention sites: Crime Prevention Association in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Salvation Army Boys and Girls Club in Winston-Salem, North Carolina; and Boys and Girls Club of San Gabriel Valley in El Monte, California. These three clubs will develop and field test intensive youth gang intervention methods. At present, these intervention methods are in the developmental stages. The intervention sites will develop and document model gang intervention programs focusing on activities for youth 12 to 16 years old. Intervention sites will also use the three-part training manuals being used at the prevention sites.

The first phases of intervention training began in July 1990. Results are not available at this time. An evaluation team will submit an indepth progress report to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Based on a set of program principles and recommendations, the sites will develop programs tailored to the youth they serve and the needs of the community. Training, program manuals and other materials developed as a result of an extensive review of the literature, telephone surveys, training needs assessment, and onsite assessment visits by the program's national staff will be utilized at all sites. A summary assessment report is scheduled for completion in 1991.

SMART Moves

To enhance Targeted Outreach's delinquency prevention efforts, OJJDP awarded BGCA a grant, in October 1987, to train staff in SMART Moves, a drug, alcohol, and teen pregnancy prevention program for youth.

SMART Moves is a community-based program helping adolescents learn to say "no" to drug use and early sexual activity. Prevention teams—consisting of Club members and staff, community members and parents—lead small groups to help the participants develop skills necessary to identify and resist negative peer and social pressures. By interacting and talking with peers, adults, and the older Club members, youth improve skills that will help them cope with stress and solve problems. The program increases their self-esteem, and encourages effective communication with their parents, friends, Club staff, and neighbors.

For more than 4 years, the SMART Moves program at the Hillside Community Center in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, has relied on parents to augment its daily operations. Parental involvement has enabled the Center to provide an afterschool hot meal program, with breakfast and lunch programs in the summer. Club staff report that parent volunteers enable the Club to provide a variety of special activities, including celebrations and holiday festivities for Club members.

As one of the original demonstration sites to receive SMART Moves training, Hillside has incorporated all the SMART Moves components in its Club, including these two small group programs: (1) Start SMART for youth ages 10–12, and (2) Stay SMART for youth ages 13–15.

Keep SMART

The Center's parent program, Keep SMART, began in an unusual way. A prevention team took the participants—primarily single parents—to a weekend camp where they learned listening skills, parenting skills, and networking strategies. This became the Keep SMART program. Participants report that they are now better able to communicate with their children as a result of Keep SMART training.

Be SMART

Be SMART provides inservice training for Club staff, prevention teams, and volunteers. It supports the activities and messages of the small group programs. The entire Hillside staff has been trained in this curriculum.

with substance abuse prevention and alternatives to illegal drug use (e.g., SMART Moves community developments) in 15 public housing developments with newly established Clubs, established Clubs, or no Clubs.

Columbia University researchers found that Boys and Girls Clubs exert a positive and consistent influence on youth living in public housing. Children and adolescents living in public housing developments where Clubs have been established are much less involved in dangerous activities than their counterparts who do not have access to a Club.

Adult residents of public housing with Boys and Girls Clubs benefited as well. Compared to parents in housing developments without Clubs, they were more involved in school programs, youth-oriented activities, and resident activities. The study also revealed a reduction in illegal drug use, drug trafficking, and other drug-related activities.

Recognition award

The work done in establishing Clubs in public housing and introducing SMART Moves in these Clubs earned BGCA the 1990 Exemplary Prevention Program Award given by the Office of Substance Abuse Prevention.

OJJDP's partnership with BGCA has provided continuity, direction, and vision to the Targeted Outreach, SMART Moves, and Boys and Girls Clubs in public housing programs. In the future, the partnership will perpetuate these successful delinquency prevention approaches by endorsing their replication and disseminating information about the programs.

The success of OJJDP and BGCA's partnership, combined with other efforts such as the FBI Demand Reduction Program, will benefit communities, individuals, and society as a whole. This continued cooperation will enable the development of new prevention strategies, enhancement of current programs, and strengthening of Boys and Girls Clubs of America.

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The Assistant Attorney General, Office of Justice Programs, coordinates the activities of the following program Offices and Bureaus: the Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Institute of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Office for Victims of Crime.

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